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### Freedom and Force

One of the strangest occurrences in post-war Europe has been the separation of nationalism and democracy, these forces which have been united for almost two hundred years. Even as late as the end of the Great War, the principle of national self-government was usually conceived in democratic terms and the future of a peaceful world was envisaged in the free and equal coöperation of national governments expressive of the people's will. Now however, democracy has been displaced in most countries by dictatorships or oligarchies, and is menaced in the few countries where it still remains. On the other hand, nationalism, its former associate, has become the passionate enemy of popular self-government. How can we explain this severance? On the one hand the war has inflamed the spirit of nationality with fears, suspicions and ambitions, which tend to a universal concentration upon foreign relations and these feed a competitive power policy. The importance and intricacy of foreign relations seem to demand a statecraft finer and more skilled in its technique than the rough and ready procedure of parliamentary government. When it is recognized that internal problems of economic reconstruction are everywhere coupled with the problem of the maintenance of peace, we realize the awful new strain that is put on democratic institutions. History has long made us familiar with dictatorship as a war emergency. But, peace, like war, has emergencies of its own---and you all know that the establishment of dictatorship is traceable to these



emergencies. In the first place, there is a lack of faith in the reality and duration of the sort of peace attained by the treaties of 1919 and the subsequent international agreements. The undercurrents of suspicion and hostility everywhere apparent sustain an all but universal war mentality. Secondly, the peace of 1919 let loose in many countries the forces of class war which in Russia, Italy and Germany were the direct precursors of dictatorship. The success of the proletarian revolution in Russia encouraged hopes of socialism and communism in other countries, and after the successful rally of the propertied and powerful classes had stamped out this revolution, the democratic constitution which the organized workers sought to utilize was suspended and abolished.

But his rough summary of actual events does not confront us with the deeper causes of the collapse of European democracy, for these emergencies only accelerated and intensified problems that were already gathering momentum in pre-war times. The belief in the pacific <sup>c</sup>ommercial internationalism and in a fair sharing of the fruits of economic progress among different nations and classes embodied in the mid-Victorian doctrine of free trade, had faded into dim and unattainable ideals even before the close of the last century, and with ~~the~~<sup>it</sup> had gone that easy optimistic faith in a democratic electorate as the all-sufficient instrument of good government.

The visible failure of this economy of free trade, expressed in the fights for "places in the sun", for areas of exploitation and markets on the one hand, the organization of economic forces for strikes and class struggles on the other, has brought about conditions unprovided for in the ordinary scheme of political

democracy. Every modern government is bedevilled by a number of difficult tasks never contemplated in the formative periods of democracy. How can the common sense of a wide electorate cope successfully with the intricacies of tariffs, quotas, subsidies and other instruments of economic nationalism, or with the delicate development of social service designed to safeguard and improve the conditions of the working classes, or with the niceties of taxation and the widening demands of public revenue? Not only can the ordinary elector play no real part in such an art of government, but <sup>what difficulties he has in</sup> ~~he cannot be expected~~ <sup>we all know</sup> ~~to choose~~<sup>ing</sup> representatives competent to do so. Yet we are not prepared to scrap democracy as an absolute<sup>2</sup> device in government. One thing we have learned in the past decades and this is that individual liberty cannot be taken as an absolute criterion of sound politics without a fuller inquiry into the uses of that liberty. Freedom has no value apart from the use to which it is put. In order to be real, liberty must be associated with opportunity. With each expansion of modern social organization there has taken place a contraction of certain individual liberties needed for the achievement of common serviceable ends. The surrender of these liberties may, indeed, be regarded as an act of free will, based on a rational estimate that the ultimate gain will be greater than the loss---or that lower liberties are exchanged for higher liberties upon our scale of values. Though regimentation is not in itself either an agreeable word or an agreeable process, it is essential to efficiency of social conduct and implies a definite surrender of personal liberty in order that a larger liberty



may be obtained for the utilization of higher opportunities. Work in a factory or on a railway, coöperation for any productive work, involves an imposition of discipline and force. Nor is it only the employer who imposes discipline and dictates orders. The worker who enters a trade union surrenders his right to make a personal bargain with his employer or to take any action separately from his fellow members as a group. In every society, whether for work or play, the individual gives up some right of individual action in return for the benefits of coöperation.

But we say there are certain individual liberties the surrender of which does not fall within this economy of coöperation. The voluntary abandonment of free-thought, free-speech, free conduct to the arbitrary rule of a political dictator is an abdication of personality which we cannot justify. In other words, just as personal liberty may be abused by infringing on the liberty of another, so likewise it may be abused by the suppression of the higher, more enduring liberties within the ambit of personal life. Once more the words of Milton ring in our ears, "Give me the liberty to know, to utter, and to argue freely according to conscience above all other liberties". This is no glorious rhetoric, but the expression of a sound doctrine of freedom. For no sane man would barter away the free exercise of his powers of thought and speech for any material or spiritual comfort. Epictetus, though bodily enslaved never surrendered the freedom of his soul. This consideration may appear trite, but it carries a terrible significance at this moment when in several countries in Europe tyranny is applied in a deliberate and wholesale manner to the enslavement of the human spirit. To say in defence of all such acts of spiritual tyranny that

they prevent men from thinking wrongly or from forming dangerous opinions, is to deny reason as a factor in civilization. For the right to make mistakes in thought as in conduct is essential to every sort of progress. Even in these economic emergencies which seem to justify dictatorship it is a short-sighted policy to repress the right of individual criticism or of conscientious objections. For the mere pretense of solidarity and unanimity that is not real cannot add strength to national effort either in war or in peace. Even if falsehood is kept in the dark, it poisons the spirit of the nation and the more successful such despotism of the mind is, the heavier the damage when the danger is passed. For there is a unity of the soul that makes it impossible to repress free thought in politics without breeding a dogmatism and a timidity in all other processes of thinking, even in those physical sciences to which despots look for their effective instruments of force. Germany's marvelous advances in science occurred in a stimulating atmosphere of mental freedom; the poisoning of the social sciences is already infecting psychology and biology and will inevitably pass the thin barrier between the organic and the inorganic sciences. There is no such thing as a German truth, and English truth, a Polish truth or a French truth, but only so many different roads towards the truth. Though the Englishman's truth is never quite identical with the Frenchman's, the German's, the Pole's conception of the truth, they have in common at least the striving after truth.

Such considerations help us to understand the true function of force in the administration of freedom. We realize today that the narrower liberties may be suppressed in favor of broader liberties, lower liberties in favor of higher liberties, that



is to say, of such liberties as are essential to the achievement of finer personal and social values. Here everything depends on the right use of force. The process of expanding human coöperation has halted today at the barrier of nationalism and this halt is now endangering the very fabric of civilization itself. No one should know better than the historian that at every step in the march of man toward a wider, closer social and political coöperation some element of force, physical and moral, has been necessary to secure and maintain the new achievement. Only in this way has more liberty upon a higher level been attained. As the autocracy of the primitive family yields to tribalism, and tribalism to provincialism and this again to nationalism, there has taken place a natural pressure of human interests in favor of a wider scope. But in each case the crust of custom and the appeal of short-sighted selfishness must be broken by an appeal to enlightened authority wielding force. Now civilization is brought up at the final barrier, that of the absolute sovereign autocracy of the nation state. The refusal to face the next step of international coöperation, in spite of the urgent needs of peace and economic recovery, is really the refusal to expand the area of forcible sanctions. The governments of some nations appear to regard this next step as impracticable or undesirable, or both----but the Hitlers, the Mussolinis may yet compel us to take this step. If we the peoples of this country and of other countries desire that the glories of peace should take the place of the glories of war, that great and beneficent change will assuredly come to pass. But if the wild mob-mind can always be stirred to sudden passion by the skilled propaganda of war mongers, peace will forever

remain poised precariously upon a balance of power that is continually disturbed.

Many peace-lovers despair of the moral conscience and resolution that are needed for this. But may they not be mis-reading the situation? May not inflamed nationalism that shows itself everywhere the enemy of international cooperation and international government be the last violent effort of an obsolete social system? Up until recently, nationalism was mainly concerned with the internal task of supplanting narrower sorts of government by one embracing the whole nation. Peoples were not opposed to one another in this consolidation. Who did not sympathize with Italy's, with Germany's struggles for a common national goal? But now nationalism has passed into the state of hostility and wreckage. Like in its economic and in its political meaning it makes for war. Economically its adherents profess a self-sufficiency, an isolation, which is impossible for even the best-equipped country, and this process has developed into a deadly fight for markets both at home and abroad.

This conversion of nationalism from a friendly internal cooperation into a hostile external competition alters the whole mundane process. Reason, justice, liberty were the regulative principles in the earlier nationalism. But the new nationalism is a repudiation of reason, justice and liberty. It refuses to extend to the society of nations those principles and policies which were accepted as serviceable and just within each particular nation. But accompanying and organically related to the clash between nations is the class war within each European nation. It is worse than idle to ignore the interdependence of these two



areas of conflict; the competitive struggle between nations and class struggles. A peace movement which today seeks to confine itself to the political relations between nations cannot succeed. For as we have already seen, the main disturbances in these international relations arise from an economic situation derived from a struggle for external markets due to the low consuming power allotted to the working classes at home. Nowhere is this more obvious than in the dictator countries on the Continent.

The expenses of a nationalism which seeks economic self-sufficiency on the one hand, and adequate armed strength for <sup>its</sup> foreign policy of defence and aggression upon the other, must eat every more deeply into the standard of living of the laboring masses and the profits of the employers. Enthusiastic propaganda may induce a temporary popular surrender of political and intellectual freedom, but it cannot long prevail against a falling rate of wages and profits. Economic unsoundness must in the end undermine the momentary political appeal of spiritual tyranny. A solution in the closely allied fields of politics can be found in <sup>a</sup> ~~a~~ *State, thus a* state which is part of an international system of federated states in which the former power of national sovereignty is subordinated to a world-force for the administration of international law and justice.

This may seem a far cry from our immediate predicament. But may not the greatness of our peril be a stimulus to the reason of peoples to pull up from the brink of disaster? And the first step? "Give me the liberty to know, to utter, and to argue freely according to conscience above all other liberties". So said Milton. I can say nothing better, or as good.